



TEAM REPORT OF FINDINGS

Southern New Hampshire University

Application for

Renewal of State Board of Education Degree Granting Authority

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Review Methods: Overview of SNHU and Operating Authorization and Accreditation

Description of the University and its status as an institution of higher education

Southern New Hampshire University (formerly New Hampshire College), located in Manchester, New Hampshire, has been offering courses and programs in Maine since 1967. Originally located on military bases, specifically Brunswick Naval Air Station, the Brunswick Center moved from the Naval Air Station to its current location at 10 Tibbetts Drive in the Cook's Corner area of Brunswick after SNHU was granted approval to operate in non-federal territory in 2002. Due to the heightened security on military bases following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, non-Navy related students were unable to access classes on the Brunswick Naval Air Station, thus necessitating the move of the Center. Although some services were still available for Navy personnel at the Naval Air Station until its closure in 2011, this is no longer the case and all instructional and administrative functions are now located at the Cook's Corner location.

The institution, founded in 1932 as the New Hampshire School of Accounting and Secretarial Sciences, made significant changes in the 1960's. In 1961, it was incorporated and renamed the New Hampshire College of Accounting and Commerce. The state of New Hampshire granted the college its charter in 1963, which gave it degree-granting authority, at that time offering associate and bachelor's degrees. In 1968, the college became a non-profit institution and its name was shortened to New Hampshire College in 1969. The college has continued to grow and change over the intervening years; these changes included a relocation to a larger location on the northern border of Manchester, the addition of the MBA degree in 1974 (which has grown to more than two dozen specialized MBAs), broadening academic programs in the liberal arts, education, business and economic development, the establishment of masters and doctoral degrees and expanding outreach through off-campus continuing education centers (such as Brunswick) and a distance on-line program which has grown rapidly and exponentially and which today represents the vast majority (93% combined on line and continuing education) of the total institutional enrollment. In 2000, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to advance the College designation to University status and in 2001, New Hampshire College became Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). SNHU has continued to grow in recent years, adding new buildings to its home location in Manchester (new academic building, dining center, residence hall) and replaced its Shapiro Library with a new Learning Commons which opened in 2014.

While SNHU offers a variety of degrees, the Brunswick Center currently provides the following degrees and graduate level courses, offered in a hybrid methodology, onsite in Maine: 1) MBA Business Administration, 2) Organizational Leadership, 3) MS in Clinical Health Counseling (PCMH) and 4) Master of Education (Med). This review is confined to these programs offered at the Brunswick Center.

The renewal review process commenced with the selection of the review team in early January and then with a meeting of the review team (whose names appear on page 1

of this document) on January 8 to discuss the standards, the process and the timeline. The face to face meeting with SNHU was held on January 15. The review is solely focused on the programs offered onsite at the Brunswick Center (referenced above). The review team met after this meeting to go over the materials and responses from SNHU, and discussed their impressions of achievement of the standards. All concurred that each standard was satisfied; a complete discussion of each follows, and the review team's final determination appears at the end of this document.

Operating Authorization and Accreditation

SNHU was granted legal authorization to operate and grant diplomas in New Hampshire in 1932. Authorization to confer postsecondary undergraduate and graduate degrees in 1962. The Maine State Board of Education has authorized SNHU to operate in Maine since 2003.

SNHU is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE). All programs offered by SNHU are encompassed within this regional accreditation. The last NEASC review was conducted in 2012 and the next full review will occur in 2021. In addition to regional accreditation, specific SNHU undergraduate and graduate also carry programmatic accreditations: Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP); Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE); New Hampshire State Department of Education for Teacher Certification; National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM).

All Continuing Education Centers and Distance Education are included within the accreditation for the University as a whole. The programs offered at the Brunswick Center are covered by accreditation from all of the accrediting bodies mentioned above.

The State of New Hampshire has verified the charter of SNHU as an institution of higher education operating within New Hampshire.

Standard A - Organization and Governance

SNHU is governed by a Board of Trustees created under authority granted by the General Court of New Hampshire. The Board has an authorized membership of up to 15 members who serve three-year staggered terms; the President/CEO serves as an ex-officio member. Additional representatives to the Board include a faculty representative, alumni representative and a student observer. There is a provision within the By-Laws for individuals to serve in the capacity of “Trustee Emeritus”; there does not appear to be anyone currently in that status. The current chair is Mark A. Ouellette who is a Senior VP for Operations for Pitney Bowes. Additional officers of the Board include the Board Chair, President (of SNHU), Secretary and Treasurer; these are elected annually by the Board. The Secretary and Treasurer (and any assistants so designated) do not have to be members of the Board in order to serve in such a capacity.

The President’s Senior Leadership Team includes: the University College Provost and Executive Vice President; the Executive Vice President for the College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE); Senior Vice President & Chief HR Officer; Vice Presidents for Institutional Advancement and for Communications; Chief Compliance Officer; General Counsel; Executive Director, College for America; the Executive Vice President for University Finance and Chief Financial Officer; the Chief Information Officer (currently Interim); the Director of Community Relations; and the Chief of Staff.

The Executive Director for Regional Centers oversees the operations at all Regional Centers. Faculty recruiting and scheduling occurs within the main College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE) offices in Manchester. Priorities and planning specific to the Centers is incorporated within the overall strategic planning of COCE.

This Standard is met.

Standard B - Institutional Objectives

In its own words from the institutional website, SNHU “educates intellectually and culturally enriched individuals to be successful in their careers and contribute to their communities.” SNHU’s educational philosophy “challenges students’ intellectual potential and prepares them for professional lives in an ever-changing and increasingly interconnected world. It provides a supportive and close-knit learning community, delivering engaging instruction in a flexible variety of formats. Students develop the knowledge to understand a complex world, the skills to act effectively within that world and the wisdom to make good choices. They do so within a community of teachers, staff and peers that is encouraged to add its scholarly, creative and pedagogical contributions to the larger social good.” Student testimonials found online provide evidence of this mission and philosophy as do the guiding principles which articulate the fundamental principles upon which undergraduate students learn and grow within the institution.

In both our research and in our discussion with SNHU academic and administrative staff, SNHU’s flexible approach to accommodating students’ lives and learning needs as they work toward achievement of their degrees is evidenced throughout their approach to program delivery and is a direct reflection of their mission. This sort of flexibility is to be commended.

This Standard is met.

Standard C- Degree Requirements

A diversity of degrees are offered by SNHU via the College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE). Specific to the Brunswick Center, the following degree programs are offered in Maine:

- Graduate level courses:
 - MBA Business Administration
 - Organizational Leadership
 - Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (PCMH)
 - Master of Education

MBA Business Administration:

Per SNHU, the Global MBA program has been moved to a 39 credit MBA to include a number of 39 credit MBA with concentrations. Also, entirely face-to-face instruction at the Brunswick Center has now been modified to a hybrid model, where a portion of the degree is completed online.

Organizational Leadership:

SNHU relays that there is no change to this 36 credit degree program.

Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (PCMH):

As previously approved, the SNHU Graduate Program in Community Mental Health and Mental Health Counseling has been offered in Maine since 2010. However, beginning in May, 2015, the program changed its name to Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and offers a specialization in either Integrated Mental Health and Addictions Treatment for Children, Youth and Families or for Adults.

Of note, the previously approved Graduate Program in Community Mental Health and Mental Health Counseling had offered a minimum 60 credit Master of Science degree, and in SNHU's own words, "also offered a 22 credit Certificate completed within the first year of the M.S., and a minimum 48 credit Master of Science, that did not lead to licensure". The 22 credit Certificate and minimum 48 credit Master of Science is no longer offered. Currently, all students will complete a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, requiring 63 or 66 credits, dependent on whether students complete 700 or 1,000 hours of practicum and internship. (The practicum/internship portion will encompass an approved 100 hours of practicum and two to three 300 hour pass/fail internships).

The Graduate Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is a competency based program (offering graduate education in integrated clinical mental health and substance abuse counseling, noting the importance of clinical and leadership skills in community-based behavioral health care) that combines face-to-face instruction and distance-learning activities geared toward adult learners, involving onsite weekend instruction (one weekend per month) for cohorts within the five states involved. SNHU also relays in their own words that "while licensure is not guaranteed, the program

prepares students to pursue licensure as clinical mental health or professional counselors and also covers much of the educational content required for certification as a substance abuse counselor”.

Master of Education:

The Master of Education degree is a 36 graduate degree offered in a blended design, which allows for completion in a two year span of time. (However, there are presently no students in face-to-face classes; these students are currently taking their classes on-line). This program focuses on five aspects of education: curriculum and management, assessment and evaluation, teaching and instructional technology, learning and development, and leadership and organization. Furthermore, a Certificate of Advanced Graduate study is a 31 credit program (on-line only) beyond the master’s degree which, with faculty guidance and support, is individually developed through self-designed courses of study.

This Standard met.

Standard D - Admissions Requirements

SNHU admissions requirements for all of its programs are clearly defined for all of the academic programs offered in Maine and are comparable with admissions requirements for similar programs at peer institutions.

The institution provides opportunities to students to transfer credits from other institutions (with a maximum of 6 graduate credits being accepted into a graduate-level program). In order to transfer degree appropriate credits into graduate programs, students must have earned at least a B grade in those courses with a minimum requirement of 2.0 cumulative GPA. Transfer course grades are not calculated into the students' grade point average once accepted into SNHU.

Due to the nature of the graduate programs provided by SNHU, it is reasonable to expect that many of the students enrolling into these programs in Maine are adult learners who are incumbent professionals in their field. A number of the programs offered enroll students using a cohort model, but SNHU, consistent with its mission, provides flexibility for students to take necessary leaves of absence from the cohort with a number of options for re-entry into the cohort including taking classes at other physical sites, on-line learning, and independent study when necessary.

Enrollment numbers in live courses at the SNHU center in Brunswick, Maine have declined over the past few years, but there is an increase in online courses. This is consistent with the nature of the student body attracted to such programs as online learning provides greater flexibility for employed students. SNHU continually seeks to develop articulation agreements with Maine institutions; specifically in regard to articulations between associate and baccalaureate degree program.

This Standard is met.

Standard E - Academic Programs

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) has been granted authority to grant diplomas in New Hampshire since 1932, and was later authorized to confer postsecondary undergraduate and graduate degrees in 1962. Of note, the Maine State Board of Education has authorized the University to operate in Maine since 2003.

It is the mission of Southern New Hampshire University to educate “intellectually and culturally enriched individuals to be successful in their careers and contribute to their communities”. The documentation and site interview made it clear that extensive efforts have been made to help ensure that the courses offered through the College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE) at the Brunswick Center remain consistent with the same requirements and objectives as those that are offered in the traditional campus setting. Courses follow the same requirements and objectives, and use the same syllabi and textbooks as courses taught on the main campus. Additionally, the Brunswick Center upholds all the same academic policies as the University, particularly in regards to accommodations for students with disabilities, academic honesty, course content, class size, and contact hours with students.

SNHU is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the regional accreditation agency for colleges and universities in the six New England states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. All of the programs offered by SNHU are approved by NEASC, and all programs offered via College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE) at the Brunswick Center are included within the accreditation for the University as a whole.

In their own words, SNHU reports that “changes to the administration of the program in Maine include a transfer of center director duties and responsibilities to the Executive Director of Regional Centers”. Also, “faculty recruiting and scheduling has been centralized to the College of Online and Continuing Education (COCE) offices located in Manchester, NH. Each student is assigned an advisor who resided at the COCE offices with one advisor splitting their time between satellite locations”. Additionally, “a military advisor has an office in the Brunswick Center and has students assigned from around the country, and there are three (3) student success advocates”. Furthermore, the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program “continues to be administered out of the SNHU Vermont office, and students are assigned an advisor from that office.”

As stated earlier, the previously approved SNHU Graduate Program in Community Mental Health and Mental Health Counseling has changed its name to Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and offers a specialization in either Integrated Mental Health and Addictions Treatment for Children, Youth and Families or for Adults. New cohorts of about 15-25 students start approximately every 18 months. The program curriculum, administration, core faculty and delivery modality are the same across all five states in which the program is offered (New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Alaska) and have not changed significantly from the prior

approval. The program is designed to be accessible to its target population, the working professional as well as others who wish to pursue careers in this discipline. All courses in the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling are based on a comprehensive set of core competencies related to the field, and in addition to the professional perspective, seeks to include the perspective of services users and their families. SNHU relates that faculty are “scholar/practitioners who bring national and local expertise in clinical mental health and addictions counseling, integrated service delivery, research and administration to the program”. Of note, SNHU relays that while these changes are not substantive, they (in their own words) “reflect a better alignment of the program name and course titles with state regulations governing licensure as a Clinical Professional or Mental Health Counselor across the five states in which the program is offered”.

The four graduate programs discussed in this renewal are offered as blended programs, with some courses taken face-to-face at the Brunswick Center and some courses taken using an on-line delivery method. All programs are subject to review via a cycle of every five years (or earlier if needed). SNHU relates that these programs are taught using a combination of full-time faculty, and adjuncts (whose credentialing is set by the University). All adjuncts undergo a robust orientation, and enjoy the same performance management review, evaluation, opportunity for professional development, and salary and benefits as set by the University for core faculty.

All graduate students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better. No grades below a “C,” (and no more than two grades of C+ or below) will be accepted for graduation. (A Scholastic Standing Committee votes on issues around student performance at the end of each term). Additionally, a maximum of six graduate credits may be transferred from another accredited college or university (subject to approval by the SNHU program), and students must complete the Master’s degree within eight calendar years of acceptance.

This Standard is met.

Standard F- Faculty

Specific to the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (PCMH), there are four program administrative staff within PCMH who also currently teach within the program. The Director of the SNHU Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is responsible for program leadership, program and curriculum development, budget and enrollment management, faculty recruitment, faculty and staff supervision, oversight of operations, liaison for accreditation and licensure. Additionally, the Director has teaching responsibilities in the PCMH program and oversees PCHM curriculum development. The Assistant Academic Coordinator for the program is involved with curriculum development, coordinates advising and also reviews of academic progress.

In addition to teaching responsibilities and participation in program evaluation, the Assistant Academic Coordinator of the SNHU program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is also a liaison to the licensing boards, and is the current advisor for Maine students. Moreover, there is an Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Specialist, and also an individual who serves as a part time advisor, site development and recruitment specialist. In addition to the program administrative staff who provide instruction, the program is filled out with a core of “senior” part-time faculty who teach on a regular basis, and adjunct faculty drawn from local expertise and teach on a course-by-course basis. This breadth of full time, practitioners, and scholars offer a diverse and deep group of experts for the students to draw upon as they progress in their program. Additionally, any initial syllabus is prepared by a Course Development faculty member to assure that all objectives are met, there is minimal overlap across courses, and there is consistency across sites. Subsequent academic use may allow for some modification to the syllabus as needed, in consultation with the Director, to assure consistency in meeting educational objectives and provide for continual review and renewal of course content by expertise in the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling degree program.

As stated earlier under Standard E - Academic Programs, SNHU relates that the programs at the Brunswick Center are taught using a combination of full-time faculty, and adjuncts (whose credentialing is set by the University). Of note, there are 27 Undergrad and Graduate active adjuncts teaching at the Brunswick Center. Adjuncts use the same syllabi and textbooks as identified by full time faculty to ensure course continuity. All adjuncts undergo a robust orientation, and enjoy the same performance management review, evaluation, opportunity for professional development, and salary and benefits as set by the University for core faculty. The site interview revealed that there is a sense that adjunct faculty bring a real world perspective and expertise to the course they teach and are a valuable addition to the faculty at large.

This Standard is met.

Standard G - Student Services

The student support mantra of SNHU is that they “out care” for their students more than other institutions. That focus on student service is evident in their approach to student services available in person at the center in Brunswick. Those services provided an immediate layer of services to students which are enhanced by further services at an institutional level provided by SNHU from a distance and online.

SNHU on-site orientations/immersion weekends provide incoming students with a concise overview of the institution’s mission and values, program information and expectations, technological logistics, and information on what services are available to students both live and online (such as library and writing center services). In addition to the regularly scheduled orientations, SNHU provides “mini-orientations” for students entering program at a number of alternative start-up times for certain degree programs.

A comprehensive system of academic advising is available to students. In Brunswick, faculty advisors are available to students on-site and the center provides access to a live military advisor and a student service advocate. In addition to the advocate’s advising role, this person is also the primary point person for student services and orientation. In line with their “never give up on a student” advising motto, SNHU also layers localized advising with student access to advising and other student support services. The institution follows a systematic and robust review process of student concerns and complaints and involves all appropriate parties in those reviews to best serve the needs of the students. SNHU uses a Student Satisfaction Survey as a means of service assessment at the end of each academic term.

Most programs offered at the Brunswick Center require extensive student internships – many with mandated hours based on industry and licensure requirements. Students have access to internship and career placement services within SNHU’s extensive, state and nation-wide placement sites. While students in Brunswick bear some responsibility to seek and find appropriate internship placements, an SNHU Career Center Representative is on-site every 6 weeks to assist with that process.

There is an on-going process to review and improve web sites for outreach centers such as the one for the Brunswick center. As it stands, the current Brunswick center website leaves one confused about which degree programs can be fully completed live and on-site, which are only available online, and which degrees include a combination of both modalities. In navigating the site, it is difficult to gain complete information about programs and services without actually contacting SNHU by phone. An improvement in this area would serve students and the institution well.

This Standard is met.

Standard H - Library and Learning Resources

Shapiro Library supports all SNHU students whether they are online or on campus. In 2014, the Shapiro Library moved into the new Library Learning Commons (which includes library learning services, an IT help desk, the Learning Center, a Café and the Innovation Lab and Makerspace).

Using “innovative services and technologies”, the library delivers information and instruction necessary for academic success and lifelong learning. Shapiro Library provides online access and onsite instruction for researching leading business, education, arts and sciences databases. The selection of over 183 databases contains full-text journals, magazines, reports and newspapers chosen to support the curriculum. If a student needs an article or book not available in one of the online databases, Shapiro Library’s Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery will obtain the student’s request and sent it electronically or via U.S. mail (for those students living outside of Manchester, NH). Student may contact one of the professional librarians via phone, email or chat to start their own personal research session.

The library has a partnership with the Curtis Memorial Library in Brunswick, ME to serve all COCE students (both those in the programs at the Brunswick Center and those online students in the area), faculty and staff at the Center. These groups have full access to the services of the Curtis Library, including reference librarians and interlibrary loan. The University purchases specialized books, periodicals and serials to supplement the Curtis Library collection to meet specific curriculum needs and broaden their collection holdings. The current budget for these acquisitions is \$7500 per year.

Students and faculty have access to a tutorial for the use of the technology and the use of BlackBoard (the learning management system). Students have a course to take before they start their course which leads them through how to do online coursework, and an advisor is assigned to each student whose role in part is to help acclimate the student to the use of the technology. There is a library staff member who has responsibility for the Centers and travels to them periodically, meets by appointment with faculty while on site, and ensures that faculty and students know of the resources, both new and existing. Learning Resource Coordinators work with the faculty and also work with the Student Success Advocates who serve the students.

This Standard is met.

Standard I – Facilities

The SNHU center in Brunswick is located in an attractive, modern and ADA accessible building. The center has adequate classrooms, computer labs, office spaces, and multi-purpose spaces for use by faculty, students, and staff. The building has wireless internet service and up-to-date classroom technology is available in each classroom.

The SNHU Brunswick Center is leased property. Institutional facilities administration, personnel, and an engineer responsible for centers, include the Brunswick site in their overall capital plan and maintain a strong and cooperative relationship with the landlord to establish priorities for maintenance and other building related necessities.

This Standard is met.

Standard J - Financial Resources

SNHU has sufficient financial resources needed to support the Brunswick, Maine Center despite declining enrollment at the Center within the onsite programs and a net loss of \$236,920 in the current fiscal year. This site represents a very small share of the total SNHU budget (generating revenue of \$457,649 against a total institutional operating revenue budget of over \$305M; Center expenses are \$694,569 - institutional operating expenses are approximately \$271M). The three year projection (2016-2018) for the Brunswick Center shows a continuing decline in revenue (and slight increase in expense), with the deficit projected to lessen somewhat in 2018. When asked about the level of commitment to the Brunswick Center in the face of declining enrollment and a deficit, SNHU representatives asserted their commitment to the Center and to ensuring that students would be able to complete programs either at the Center or through the availability of online alternatives. A marketing campaign is being launched to hopefully bolster enrollment.

As confirmed within the 2012 NEASC review, SNHU has had substantial operating surpluses for several years, and the years contained within the financial statement (2013 and 2014) confirm this. As of 6/30/15, SNHU's unencumbered reserve is \$125M in cash and cash equivalents and \$190M in total unrestricted net assets; the value of endowments and investments is \$21,811,715. SNHU does not typically provide five year projections; for the purpose of this review, what has been provided is deemed sufficient.

The growth and development specifically within COCE (which overall enrolls over 60,000 students), under which the Brunswick Center sits, appears to provide financial stability to the overall institution and to supporting the operation at the Brunswick Center. According to the Executive VP for COCE, SNHU has long considered their regional centers to also be an important part of supporting their regional presence and to their dedication to students in New England. As such, the financial picture at any Center is weighed as part of the overall institutional picture as opposed to being viewed in isolation only as a Center.

This Standard is met.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As evidenced by the information contained within each standard described within this document, Southern New Hampshire University meets all standards and requirements related to its continued physical presence in the State of Maine at the Brunswick Center. Although there is some concern about declining enrollment at the Center, SNHU is committed to the Center's continuance and to ensuring that students in Maine can receive the programs and services they need in order to complete their degrees.

In both our research and in our discussion with SNHU academic and administrative staff, SNHU's flexible approach to accommodating students' lives and learning needs as they work toward achievement of their degrees is evidenced throughout their approach to program delivery and is a direct reflection of their mission. This sort of flexibility is to be commended.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE MAINE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

It is the recommendation of the Review Team that the Maine State Board of Education grant the request for Southern New Hampshire University for reauthorization to provide graduate degree programs at the Brunswick Center in the state of Maine. The period of approval would be from March 2016 through March 2021.